

**“Since the  
ban, the bar  
business  
has dropped  
by half.”**

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**Heated Debate**

In researching this article, Mawer Watch posted a basic inquiry seeking opinions about the issue of smoking bans on the "Wine Trade Only" bulletin board of America Online.

The response was astonishing. Over the course of a week, a 60-part exchange among smokers, non-smokers and former smokers—wine lovers all—ran the gamut from free-market economics to conspiracy theories to licking toads. Debaters largely avoided the financial impact of a ban, focusing instead on two main issues: whether smoking in public is a civil right, and whether smoking restrictions would lead inevitably to a new prohibition on alcohol. The following are excerpts from the exchange. —K.V.

"If people want to smoke in their own home, that is their choice. But, when I drink wine it does not inebriate another person. Smoking, on the other hand, does affect other people besides the smoker. Walk into a bar, even in the nicest restaurants, and within 10 minutes you and your clothes smell like smoke. Think all that smoke isn't settling into your lungs, also? My main tenet in life is that people should be allowed to do whatever they want to do unless it directly hurts someone else. . . If people want to smoke, inject heroin, drink wine, or lick toads, I don't care as long as it has no effect on me. The problem with the U.S., and it has been for centuries in one form or the other, is that people try to force their beliefs on someone else. . . You want to smoke in a restaurant, start your own, don't ruin my food and wine experience."

**ENOPIE**

"What good is a ban on smoking indoors when the smokers cluster around the entrances, forcing the rest of us to plow through their cloud? . . . I think anytime I breathe any cigarette smoke without consent is equal to assault, outdoors or not."

"I'm not preaching prohibition of tobacco. Most folks aren't. . . Let the smokers smoke! They're adults, and no one wants to stop them. But they need to have more respect for us 'clean-lungers.'"

**Bobword**

**Bobword & Enopie:**

"We'll you fight as hard against total smoking prohibitions and prohibitions against other vices you do not indulge in as you would against total drinking prohibitions?"

"The answer to this question will be the test of your true principles. Cheers?" **LFTBANK**

"I'm a non-smoker, but I don't want to pass no-smoking regulations on restaurants, bars, etc. I trust business to do what makes commercial sense. And if a restaurant doesn't segregate smokers from nons, then I'll take my business elsewhere. But if Joe Blow wants to open "Smoker's Paradise," and you know before you walk in the door that this is a smoking joint, then it's your fault for entering."

"The same Health Nazis who are banning smoking from every public place . . . are the same ones who are supporting a total ban on nicotine, are the same ones who want to lower permissible BACs to .06, and will, when they get that, then go for .04 and eventually zero tolerance. And they'll do it in the name of protecting us from drunk driving (the last Prohibition I was to protect families from the evils of saloons), just as smoking and nicotine bans are justified by the fear of second-hand smoke."

"It's all a loss of freedom. . . It is easy to justify placing restrictions on somebody else in the name of do-goodism, but it's hard to stop once it gets started."

"I don't mind bans if they are instituted by business to please itself or its customers. I resent it being by government decree."

**WineTrader**

"Society draws lines between acceptable and non-acceptable behavior. It seems like smoking is being put in the latter category. That, to me, is a better justification for doing away with smoking than the economic arguments. Society says it's wrong. Period."

**SoBe**

"It is sad that we are allowing our government to legislate our rights and relationships. Tobacco, wine, next book content. . . it was a free country!"

**NikosA**